

Design Museum plans ambitious overhaul of its permanent gallery thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund

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Following the most successful year for temporary exhibitions in its history, the Design Museum today reveals major ambitions to transform its permanent gallery in time for its 40th anniversary.

At the heart of a new long-term organisational strategy — called *Transformation 2029* — is the Design Museum's plan to ensure its permanent, free-to-access gallery meets the evolving needs of visitors and reflects the fast-paced evolution of the global design story.

To achieve this, and to increase access to its collection of world-class design objects, the museum will embark on a major expansion of its permanent collection gallery, as well as a full overhaul of its displays.

Today, the museum announces the successful first milestone towards realising these ambitions. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded the project £267,249 to allow it to move into a full development phase. Thanks to National Lottery players, the Design Museum can begin an extensive process of community, audience and stakeholder consultation to help shape and progress the plans across all areas of the vision — from curation and conservation, to design specifications and business opportunities.

This development phase is expected to last up to two years and will begin with the hiring of key roles. This phase will culminate with the application for a full grant of £2,700,752 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful in this future grant, it's hoped the new gallery will be open to the public in time for the Design Museum's 40th birthday year in 2029.

The full remodelling of the gallery is at the heart of the Design Museum's new five-year strategy and business plan *Transformation 2029*. Developed last year but publicly launched today, the strategy is an ambitious programme of development which will establish strong foundations for the museum to thrive in its fifth decade and beyond.

As the UK's national museum of design, the Design Museum is a global hub for the transformative potential of design. Its new key strategic objectives as part of the strategy include engaging and nurturing the designers of tomorrow, advocating for design's role in the green transition, and ensuring its long-term financial resilience. Key targets will be to increase the museum's annual visitor numbers to 800,000 by 2029, as well as engaging a global audience of 10 million people.

The Design Museum's collection gallery

The current collection gallery — titled *Designer, Maker, User* — was inaugurated in 2016 when the Design Museum relocated to the Grade II* listed former Commonwealth Institute building in Holland Park, Kensington. It had an expected lifespan of between 5-7 years. In the nine years since, museum audience needs, design discourse and the world have all evolved, and are changing more rapidly than ever before.

Throughout the entire fabric of new gallery will be the ability to reflect these changes in a more dynamic way. Unlike the current configuration, it will be designed to be fully flexible. This will allow for the easy rotations of objects more frequently, a greater ability to quickly display new acquisitions, and more rapid display changes to tell new stories, in new ways as needed. It will mean major key developments - such as fast-moving advances in technology, material innovation and more inclusive practices - will be able to be included with ease and without being outdated too quickly.

If the project is fully realised, it will also see the full replacement of the gallery's interpretation to enhance the relevance, resonance and accessibility of the displays. Exactly how this is achieved will be formulated through community consultation and key stakeholder engagement during the development phase. Significant and vital conservation work will also be carried out on key objects from the collection to protect them for future generations.

The new gallery and its construction will have environmental responsibility at its core, reflecting the Design Museum's newly established reputation as a sector-leader in reforming museum practice for the green transition.

Tim Marlow, Director and CEO of the Design Museum, said: "Next year marks a decade since moving to our landmark home in Kensington. We have achieved many of our goals since then and the museum has evolved into an institution that is helping to set the cultural agenda, not least through record-breaking exhibitions. Expanding and improving our permanent gallery for our 40th anniversary is at the heart of our new *Transformation 2029* strategy to future-proof the museum for the next decade and beyond. We are delighted to have received this initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and thanks to all

those who contribute to the National Lottery we can now develop these exciting opportunities further.”

Stuart McLeod, Director of England — London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “We’re proud to give our initial support to the Design Museum as it embarks on this exciting journey to reimagine its permanent gallery in time for its 40th anniversary. Thanks to National Lottery players, this project will ensure that the museum’s world-class design collection is more accessible, inclusive and adaptable for the ever-changing needs of the design world. We look forward to working with the team to progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.”

Johanna Agerman Ross, Conran Foundation Chief Curator at the Design Museum, said: “*Designer Maker User* was an important collection display when the museum moved to West London in 2016, and for a decade it’s been a valuable resource, including for our hundreds of thousands of annual visitors. But it is no longer reflective of where design is heading. In recent years we have seen unprecedented changes to how we work and live, and also how we as a museum display and speak about design. We now have this critical but thrilling opportunity to radically address how we make design more accessible to museum visitors, and how we ensure it’s engaging for many years to come.”

Tom Wilson, Head of Collection and Archive at the Design Museum, said: “The Design Museum collection features some of the most recognisable design icons of the past 100 years, such as Britain’s road signs designed by Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir, the London Underground map, and a first edition Barbie doll. All are fantastic and much-loved examples of how people connect with design on a daily

basis. It is hugely exciting that we might be able to show even more of these fascinating items in the near future.”

The launch of *Transformation 2029* follows a record-breaking year for visitors to the Design Museum’s temporary exhibitions. *The World of Tim Burton* exhibition closed in May after welcoming 260,000 visitors, making it the most visited exhibition in the museum’s history. In February, *Barbie: The Exhibition* finished a run that saw it become the museum’s third most popular exhibition ever with over 144,000.

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Notes to Editors

PRESS ENQUIRIES:

Maxwell Blowfield, Senior Media and PR Manager

E: maxwell.blowfield@designmuseum.org

Press Office

E: pr@designmuseum.org

*Grant applications over £250,000 are assessed in two rounds.

Transformation 2029 / The Design Museum has initially been granted round one development funding of £267,249 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by the Heritage Fund at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award of £2,700,752.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That’s why as the largest funder for the UK’s heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#). Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

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About the Design Museum

The Design Museum is a multifaceted museum, an ever-changing space for the public, industry and education to come together and explore new ideas. A registered charity, the museum's innovative exhibitions, partnerships, research and learning programmes evidence how design can enable this planet and its inhabitants to thrive. Our landmark building in Kensington is the centre of our national network and a global hub for the transformative potential of design.



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